

## REPORTING

California law mandates elder care custodians, medical and non-medical practitioners or employees of elder protective agencies to report suspected abuse. The following is a list of elder protective agencies that you can contact if you are uncertain about reporting suspected abuse:

- The California Department of Social Services
- The county Department of Aging and Adult Services\*
- The police or sheriff's department
- The Long Term Care Ombudsman\*\*

Remember, one alert person can make a difference.

\*Phone numbers for reporting to the Department of Aging and Adult Services:

(909) 387-8444 East Valley areas

(909) 945-3888 West Valley areas

(760) 843-5100 Victor Valley areas

(760) 256-1436 Barstow

(760) 366-5751 Morongo Valley areas

(760) 326-9274 Needles

*or call APS 24-hour hotline:*

**1-877-565-2020**

\*\*Phone numbers for reporting to the Long Term Care Ombudsman:

**(909) 388-4541 Countywide**

For further information on this program and other crime prevention material, write to:

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Crime Prevention Center  
Office of the Attorney General  
P. O. Box 944255  
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550

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**We support the National  
Citizens' Crime Prevention Campaign**

# ELDER ABUSE



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**BILL LOCKYER**  
California Attorney General

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## **A MAJOR ISSUE**

Senior citizens currently represent four and a half percent of California's population. By the year 2020, over 16 percent of the state's population will be 60 years of age or older. Many of these people will retire comfortably and lead happy and robust lives. However, many of America's elderly are not experiencing the relaxation of retired life. Many are being physically, psychologically, or financially exploited – some by strangers, some by acquaintances, and some even by their own family members. Gerontologists consider this type of exploitation to be elder abuse.

Elder abuse crosses all social, economic, and ethnic lines – any elderly person could become a victim. It is important to become aware of the possibility of elder abuse and to be able to recognize signs that might suggest its occurrence. This awareness will enable us to help neighbors, friends, or family members who may be in trouble.

## **TYPES OF ABUSE**

Abuse of the elderly usually falls into the following categories:

- Physical abuse
- Financial abuse
- Physical neglect
- Psychological/Emotional abuse

The example cases that follow outline typical characteristics of elder abuse. Although they are hypothetical, they do include aspects of actual reported cases.

### ***Physical Abuse***

Joan is an 84-year-old widow who was living with her grandniece. Her home environment was clean and in a nice rural setting; however, the landlord often noticed bruises on Joan's face and arms. Suspecting abuse, he immediately notified County Adult Protective Services (APS). After assessing the situation, the APS investigator found that Joan had been beaten and slapped by her grandniece. APS removed Joan from the grandniece's care and placed her with a new caretaker.

### ***Psychological/Emotional Abuse***

Alex is a 77-year-old man who had his house cleaned twice a week by a neighborhood volunteer. When a next-door neighbor did not see Alex come out of the house for several weeks, she suspected something was wrong, so she notified the county sheriff's department. Sheriff's investigators discovered that the volunteer cleaning person had often isolated Alex in a room and verbally abused him. The matter was referred to APS, who helped Alex find a new cleaning person.

### ***Financial Abuse***

Eight-one-year-old Mitsuko is a recent widow and was residing alone in her home. A friend suggested she allow a college student to move in with her as a boarder to help pay for expenses. Soon after, the student allowed two of his friends to move in without offering to pay Mitsuko any additional rent. Next door neighbors, who regularly kept an eye on Mitsuko, became worried when they noticed groups of young people coming and going from the house at all hours. They phoned the city police department to report the matter. Police

investigators found that the students had threatened Mitsuko and had used her automated bank teller card to withdraw large sums of money. The students were arrested and Mitsuko is once again living alone.

### ***Physical Neglect***

Eighty-two-year-old Eva is paralyzed. Her eldest son was legally granted conservatorship of her estate and they lived together in a four-bedroom home. When a younger son who lived out of state came to visit, he contacted APS to report that his mother was living in an environment that he believed was unfit. An APS investigator visited Eva's home and discovered she had been locked up and forced to live in one room that was filthy and unkempt. The representative also found that she had frequently been denied proper food and medication. After this initial visit, Eva was moved to a skilled nursing facility and her younger son was placed in charge of her financial affairs.

## **YOUR INVOLVEMENT**

Fortunately, most older persons do not experience this type of treatment. Nevertheless, elder abuse is a frightening and real issue. Knowing what to look for and who to contact if you suspect abuse will help you do your part to correct the situation. By being alert to situations that could lead to abuse of an elderly person, you may be able to prevent a serious injury or even save a life.

If you live with and/or care for an elderly person, you know that the responsibility can be overwhelming at times. One way to cope is to be sure to take time away from your responsibilities on a regular basis. This will help to alleviate stress and the potential for abuse and give you a chance to put everything into perspective.